

## WITCHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council held on Wednesday 8 May 2024 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall, Witcham.

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**Present:** M Housden (Chairman), K Mackender (Vice-Chairman), G Byrne, L Holdaway, J Lucas, S Wilkin

*In attendance:* Parish Clerk/RFO

24/078 **Election of Chairman**

Mr M Housden: Proposed J Lucas, seconded S Wilkin and there being no other nominations unanimously resolved.

M Housden thanked the members and said he would take on the role again this year but next year he would like to step down.

24/079 **Chairman's Declaration of Acceptance of Office and Code of Conduct**

Declaration of Acceptance of Office and Code of Conduct form completed and signed by M Housden and witnessed by the Clerk.

24/080 **Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from County and District Councillor L Dupré and District Councillor M Inskip.

24/081 **To receive declarations of interest from Councillors on any items on the agenda**

Pecuniary interests - none

Personal interests - none

Prejudicial interests (and to inform the Chairman if they wish to speak on the matter during public participation) - none

24/082 **Dispensations**

To note any new Dispensations granted: Nil

24/083 **Election of Vice-Chairman**

Mr K Mackender: Proposed M Housden, seconded L Holdaway, and there being no other nominations unanimously resolved.

24/084 **Vice-Chairman's Declaration of Acceptance of Office and Code of Conduct**

Declaration of Acceptance of Office and Code of Conduct form completed and signed by K Mackender and witnessed by the Clerk.

24/085 **Reports from District and County Councillors**

Monthly County Council report, previously circulated, noted. Clerk gave summary of the District Council report, received earlier in the day. There were no questions.

It was noted that if Parish Councillors have any questions arising from these monthly reports, they should contact the District and County Councillors prior to the Parish Council meeting.

24/086 **Public Participation** There were no members of the public present.

24/087 **Minutes**

Minutes of the Meeting of 10 April 2024 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman, and the agenda of the same date was signed by the Chairman as confirmation of the business transacted at that meeting. Proposed J Lucas, seconded L Holdaway, and unanimously agreed.

24/088 **Matters Arising**  
There were none.

24/089 **Election of Representatives to Committees/Working Groups/Parties and External Bodies:**  
Village Hall Committee (Trustee) – S Wilkin  
Burial Board – All Councillors  
Neighbourhood Plan Working Group – M Housden, K Mackender  
CAPALC – M Housden, K Mackender  
CCC Public Rights of Way Liaison – J Lucas and S Wilkin  
EPR Power Station Community Liaison Forum – G Byrne  
Neighbourhood Watch Village Co-ordinator – J Lucas  
Play Areas/Recreation Ground, including Weekly Inspections – M Housden  
Speed Recording Equipment (MVAS) – M Housden  
Planning Applications – L Holdaway and G Byrne (to monitor and report at Council meetings)  
Designated Councillor - Safeguarding (Adults & Children) – L Holdaway  
Cams Constabulary Community Meetings – None  
East Cams Parish Forum - None  
Finance (to check monthly receipts and payments etc prior to each Council meeting) All Cllrs on a rotating basis.  
Play & Fitness Project Working Party – projects completed. Working party to be disbanded.

The above were nominated and then appointed en-bloc. Proposed J Lucas, seconded S Wilkin

24/090 **To fix Chairman's Allowance (LGA 1972 S.15(5))**  
**Resolved** that the Chairman's Allowance for 2024/25 be set at £50.00.  
Proposed G Byrne, seconded S Wilkin

24/091 **Planning Applications**  
The following were noted:  
23/01277/DISA The Old School, High Street  
To discharge Condition 5 (detailed scheme of planting and biodiversity improvements) and 6 (boundary treatments) of decision dated 01 March 2024 for 23/01277/VAR.  
To Vary Condition 4 (restriction on use of annex) to allow use holiday accommodation of previously approved 91/00531/FUL for alterations to existing buildings (including part demolition) to form detached dwelling and ancillary accommodation plus erection of garage.

The following ECDC decisions were noted  
24/00129/FUL 8 The Slade Construction of timber workshop – Approved.  
24/00143/FUL Witcham House, Headleys Lane Add 2 stables and store area to existing stable block – Approved.

24/092 **Finance and General Administration**  
a) **2023/24 year-end accounts, including budget review, draft AGAR Accounting Statements and associated year-end documents**  
Copies of receipts and payments for the year with bank reconciliation to 31 March 2024, together with Summary had been prepared and previously circulated by the Clerk on 29 April for Councillors to review for approval. Original bank statements were presented and the documents checked in the meeting. Receipts, including £16,500 Precept, CIL monies and Locality grant and Thalia play grant totalled £69,123.92. Payments £77,707.83. Balance carried forward from last

24/092 **Finance and General Administration** (cont)

year was £60,173.99 giving a balance at 31 March 2024 of £51,590.18, (including all earmarked reserves).

**Resolved** that the accounts for the year ending 31 March 2024 together with reconciliations, bank statements and the Summary be approved. Proposed K Mackender, seconded J Lucas. Chairman signed said documents.

Clerk presented the previously circulated draft AGAR Accounting Statement and Governance Statement for checking. Variances between 2022/23 and 2023/24 figures also checked.

Clerk drew attention to JPAG guidance for councillors in respect of completing the Annual Governance Statement which would be completed at the June meeting.

Draft AGAR Accounting Statements and variances were agreed and noted. Proposed J Lucas, seconded Chairman.

Clerk confirmed that the internal audit would take place on 10 May 2024.

Sections 1 and 2 of the AGAR form would be completed and signed off at the June meeting.

*All*b) **Review of Budgets and Reserves**

Budget headings examined for under and overspends.

**Resolved** to vire overspend of £1738 on salaries from general reserves. Proposed J Lucas, seconded Chairman.

Small underspends on streetlighting, S142, S137 to be left under the respective budget headings to smooth possible overspend in the next financial year. The £334.93 overspend on admin had been caused by having to purchase new computer after unexpected breakdown, albeit provision had been made in the 2024/25 budget for replacement so this would be balanced off. Grounds underspend of £725 to be carried over to 2024/25 as this would cover tree surgeon work at recreation ground which had been ordered but not completed in the 2023/24 financial year. £1000 of the underspend on annual grounds maintenance to remain to smooth any additional costs for 2024/25 with the remainder going back into general reserves. Overspend on website expenses, £342.48 to be offset against earmarked reserves for website (£688) held for future training and development.

*Clerk*

Clerk to provide updated earmarked reserves schedule and revised budget for next meeting based on the above adjustments.

**Neighbourhood plan and play project financial reports -**

separate sheets circulated.

Neighbourhood Plan: Details for receipts and payments for years 1 and 2, together with forecast to the end of the project revealed expected shortfall of approx. £2227 (subject to the Council being able to claim the remainder of the original £10,000 grant operated by Locality. Confirmation that the grant scheme would run for 2024/25 was still awaited)

**Resolved** to approve the financial report and keep Neighbourhood Plan Working Group and Consultant informed as discussed at earlier meetings. Proposed L Holdaway, seconded Chairman.

*Clerk*

Play project: Receipts £66,197.00, expenditure to-date £65,356.90. New bin etc yet to be ordered.

**Resolved** to approve the Play financial report. Proposed L Holdaway, seconded K Mackender.

c) **2023/24 Fixed Asset Register** (circulated 1.5.24) was discussed.

**Resolved** to approve 2023/24 Fixed Asset Register. Proposed L Holdaway, seconded J Lucas.

24/092 **Finance and General Administration** (cont)

- d) **Insurance Asset List** (circulated with supporting documents to Councillors for review 1.5.24). Various items discussed and final corrections made.  
**Resolved** to approve insurance asset list as amended and agreed at this meeting. Proposed G Byrne, seconded S Wilkin. *Clerk*
- e) **Approve renewal of insurance policy**  
**Resolved** to approve renewal of insurance subject to amended insurance asset list as discussed earlier. Clerk to obtain revised quote and renew in accordance with budget. Proposed J Lucas, seconded Chairman. *Clerk*
- f) **Approve receipts and payments for May 2024.** Documentation checked by Chairman. Clerk reported that the grant from Grantscape for phase 2 play project was in the bank today.  
**Resolved** to approve the Receipts and Payments schedule for May and to release cheques. Proposed L Holdaway, seconded S Wilkin. *Clerk*  
Noted invoice for May edition of What's On outstanding.  
Clarification for invoice for April edition also outstanding. *Clerk*
- g) **Review bank mandate and approve addition of new Councillor**  
**Resolved** to amend the bank mandate to include G Byrne as a signatory. Proposed Chairman, seconded J Lucas. *Clerk*
- h) **2024 Annual Parish Meeting.** Agenda had been published and copy sent to Councillors and leaders of village organisations, clubs and working groups. Apologies received from M Inskip and S Wilkin. Annual Report and Accounts reviewed and amended.  
**Resolved** to accept the quote from Ely Print Centre for printing 200 copies of the report at £174. Proposed K Mackender, seconded J Lucas.

**Exclusion of Press and Public**

**Resolved** that in accordance with section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, that as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the special and confidential nature of the business about to be transacted at Agenda Items 24/092i) to 24/092j) listed below, it is advisable in the public interest that the public and press be temporarily excluded from this meeting and they are herewith instructed to withdraw. There were no members of the public present.

- i) **RSPB Lease.** Noted - currently being reviewed by Council's solicitors and expected to be available for presentation to Council very shortly. *Clerk*
- j) **Deed Public Right of Way and Parking.** Clerk had written again reiterating that a Fixed Fee quote was required. Upon receipt these to be passed to Chair Village Hall Committee.

Meeting re-opened to public

24/093 **Recreation Ground and Cemetery Matters**

- a) **Weekly inspections** of recreation ground and play equipment had been completed by the Chairman and he had advised there were no issues to raise. Confirmed Annual Inspection would be required around January 2025.  
Chairman also reported that some paint was peeling on the village sign. The supplier had been contacted and would deal with affected area free of charge but the unit needed to be taken to their site. Clerk to get a quote from courier. *Chairman/  
Clerk*  
Chairman advised that after the trees on the recreation ground on High Street side had been trimmed in accordance with the ECDC consent, (3.5.24) a trailer loaded high with straw bales had hit a branch and a bale had fallen off. A request had been made to the tree surgeon to remove more branches but this could not be done without further

24/093 **Recreation ground and Cemetery Matters (cont)**

consent from the ECDC Tree Officer. Chairman understood Tree Surgeon would be contacting Clerk.

b) **Play and Fitness**

Completion form for Mick George Community Fund had been submitted to Grantscape and the £14,000 grant had just been received. Wicksteed was chasing up installation of the labels on all the fitness items. Post installation reports and copy of warranties had been circulated to the Play Working Party. New bin to be discussed at next meeting. Noted the Play Working Party was now disbanded as project essentially now completed.

*Chairman/  
Clerk*

c) **City of Ely 3<sup>rd</sup> X1 match dates and associated grasscutting arrangements.**

**Resolved** to approve use of recreation ground for amended cricket matches, ie 4 May rescheduled for 20 July and 18 May instead of 13 July. Proposed J Lucas, seconded K Mackender

**Resolved** that Clerk and Chairman be given consent to liaise with grass contractor regarding any additional cuts and collections required to ensure recreation ground fit for playing cricket, subject to budget. Proposed J Lucas, seconded K Mackender.

*Chairman/  
Clerk*

Noted grass had been cut and clippings collected, 7/8 May 2024.

d) **Application for use of recreation ground 1<sup>st</sup> Sutton Scouts Group on 12 May 2024.**

Documents circulated to Councillors 7 May 2024.

**Resolved** to give consent for 1<sup>st</sup> Sutton Scouts Group to use recreation ground for activities linked with their AGM at Village Hall on 12 May 2024 as detailed on the application form. Proposed J Lucas, seconded K Mackender.

*Clerk*

e) **Use of recreation ground for football training and matches from**

**September 2024.** Request by coach of nearby football team, received.

**Resolved** that in accordance with past practice, the Council would not consent to the recreation ground being used for football training and matches. Proposed J Lucas, seconded K Mackender.

*Clerk*

24/094 **Neighbourhood Plan**

No minutes of the meeting scheduled for 23 April had been received from the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group.

24/095 **Consultations**

Soham and Barway Neighbourhood Plan.

**Resolved** Witcham Parish Council had no comments to make on this Neighbourhood Plan. Proposed K Mackender, seconded Chairman.

24/096 **Highways and Streetlighting**

a) Items reported to Highways Authority - none

b) Public Rights of Way and Byway Management

Correspondence from landowner regarding Drove Management Plan, Byway 11, circulated.

**Resolved** – correspondent's comments noted and no further action required. Proposed K Mackender, seconded J Lucas.

Chairman reported on a resident's enquiry regarding what was happening about the paddocks previously used by some dog owners, in terms of preserving wildlife. He had put the resident in touch with a local resident who had a keen interest in wildlife and also a member of the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group who had an interest in conservation issues for the Neighbourhood Plan. It was also noted that planings were to be laid on part of Byway 12, at the Back Lane

- 24/096 **Highways and Streetlighting** (cont)  
end of Wardy Hill Drove to aid access to fields for agricultural vehicles etc. Clerk to contact Public Rights of Way Officer again to see when work would start and check that they had now contacted landowners as promised. *Clerk*
- 24/097 **Speedwatch and MVAS Monitoring**  
a) **Speedwatch training and sessions** – G Byrne confirmed arrangements had been made for the volunteers to get together on 28 May and Speedwatch sessions would commence as soon as possible. *GB*  
b) **Speed data** – for April, had been circulated by the Chairman. High speeds were still being recorded.
- 24/098 **Correspondence**  
The following items of information/interest, and invitations to events had been circulated and unless recorded below as otherwise, were noted:  
Elean Power Station bi-annual community liaison meeting 18 April – cancelled.  
NALC & CAPALC Bulletins and Events  
CCC Road Safety Education Newsletter  
CCC Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure  
ECDC Planning and Finance & Assets meetings  
ECDC CIL Meaningful Proportion  
Locality - Neighbourhood Planning Design Coding Guidance
- 24/099 **Date of next meeting:** 12 June 2024  
**Items for next agenda:** Bus shelter repairs and re-painting, new waste bin for recreation ground, new sign for village hall roadway.

Clerk had also circulated calendar of dates for 2024/25 which was confirmed, including moving April 2025 meeting to 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday in the month to allow completion of closing off of year-end accounts.

8 May 2024 Annual Meeting of the Council  
15 May 2024 Annual Meeting of the Parish  
12 June 2024  
10 July 2024  
11 September 2024  
9 October 2024  
13 November 2024  
8 January 2025  
12 February 2025  
12 March 2025  
16 April 2025  
30 April 2025 Annual Parish Meeting  
14 May 2025 Annual Meeting of the Council  
11 June 2025  
9 July 2025

There being no further meeting the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 9.30pm

**Schedule of Receipts and Payments**

		£	£	£
Receipts:	Nil			
Payments	002140 K&M Lighting Services	22.05	4.41	26.46
	002141 Reissued cheque following cancellation 002132.			
	002142/3 Salary Expenses	536.66		536.66
	002144 Pettit Sports	1393.95	278.79	1672.74
	002145 Wicksteed	12758.92	2551.78	15310.70
	002146 Digital Creations Signs	313.00	62.60)	
	Digital Creations Printing	67.00	)	£442.60
	002147 Oakes & Watson Trees	690.00	138.00	828.00
	002148 Wicksteed	4304.13	860.83	5164.96
	c/p MS online services – 7 licences emails	34.30	6.86	41.16

Clerk to arrange payment of insurance renewal, 1 June 2024, Minute 24/092e)

Signed..... Dated .....